

Filed for intro on 02/01/2001

SENATE BILL 382
By Dixon

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49; Title 63 and Title 68, Chapter 1, relative to dental screenings for elementary school children.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 68, Chapter 1, is amended by adding Sections 3-12 of this act, as a new part.

SECTION 2. The general assembly finds and declares the following:

(a) That underprivileged and minority children frequently do not have adequate dental health care;

(b) That early dental screening has been demonstrated to be highly effective in preventing the need for future emergency dental care; and

(c) That early dental screening and preventative care will serve the public purposes of promoting healthy dental hygiene and reducing public expenditures for dental health care and related services.

SECTION 3. The provisions of this act shall apply to any county having a population of not less than eight hundred twenty-five thousand (825,000), nor more than eight hundred thirty thousand (830,000) according to the 1990 federal census or any subsequent federal census.

SECTION 4. The department of health, by means of a grant entered into with an appropriate community organization, and in conjunction with the Tennessee public school nurse program, shall establish and oversee a dental screening pilot program for inner-city, economically disadvantaged elementary school students in urban and rural counties of this state.

SECTION 5. The pilot program shall require students at targeted schools to undergo an initial dental screening and post-screening follow-up care with a dentist.

SECTION 6. The community organization with which the state has entered into a grant, shall provide volunteers who will perform initial dental screenings on each child in the target school. After the initial screening, the child's parent or guardian shall take the child to the dentist for follow-up care. The volunteers shall provide the parent with a confirmation form to present to the dentist, which the dentist will sign, verifying that basic oral care has been completed. The dentist shall inform the parent or guardian if any additional oral care is required.

SECTION 7. The volunteers and the school nurse for each target school shall assist the parent or guardian in ensuring the child receives the basic oral care dental visits. Such assistance shall include confirming whether the child has a personal dentist, providing transportation to and from the dentist, and ensuring that the child schedules the visit with a dentist that accepts the child's insurance.

SECTION 8. The school nurse for each target school shall retain the confirmation form in the student's school medical record. The school nurse shall also maintain a list of all the children who have not received the post-screening follow-up basic dental care within six (6) months after the pilot program has started. The school nurse shall submit the names of those students to volunteers.

SECTION 9. The volunteers will follow-up with parents and guardians of children who have not received the post-screening dental care and report the findings to the school nurse.

SECTION 10. The department of health shall monitor and evaluate the success and effectiveness of the dental screening pilot program. Such evaluation shall include, but not be limited to, determining whether the children participating in the program experienced fewer instances where emergency dental care was needed. The final report on the pilot program shall be submitted by the department of health, to each member of the general assembly, on or before July 1, 2003.

SECTION 11. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2001, the public welfare requiring it.